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Local History & Genealogy Department
Kleinhagen Family

Kleinhagen

THE
ROBERT L. LUTHERAL, JR.

New Orleans, La.
6 April, 1986

Mr. Damon Veach
Louisiana Ancestors--The Times-Picayune
3800 Howard Ave., New Orleans, La.
70140

Dear Mr. Veach,

Rev. (John) Henry Weinhagen (1815-1885) had his own privately owned church, The German Evangelical Lutheran Bethlehem Church, on Felicity St. here in New Orleans for about 30 years prior to his death. He primarily served German immigrants and according to his obituary, married 1,500 couples and baptized 5,000 infants.

Enclosed, please find a copy of a marriage record that he provided the couple involved. He most likely kept records but since his church was not affiliated with a Synod or otherwise, and since the diminishing congregation reportedly disbanded with his death, there seemingly was no repository for these records. He had an unmarried daughter who survived him by 9 years who might have kept his papers. Possibly they do not exist.

Churches which evolved from his ministerial affiliations prior to 1855 have knowledge of him but no information relative to his records after that. One Minister said a Priest from Chicago had contacted him also because his great-grandparents had been married by the Rev. Kleinhagen.

If these records do exist and if they could be used, they would be of interest to thousands of people for geneological reasons alone. Even to know that they never did or do no longer exist would be useful.

I know of no other resource that would equal your weekly column in reaching other people who have undoubtedly searched for these records, possibly with success. I hope you will use this letter and the enclosed biography to seek these records; even if no records are found and you state so in a later column, it will be of help to numerous people some of whom I know personally.

It is rare that your weekly column does not have information useful to my amateur pursuit of geneology and I thank you for it. Last year you had an inquiry from a woman in Ocean Springs, Ms. relative to Elfrida Wilhelmina GEHLBACH; I have information I would like to share with the lady from Ocean Springs, but can not now locate the clipped article. I need nothing I am sending you back but will enclose a SASE should you have time to send me the lady's name and address in Ocean Springs.

DO NOT CIRCULATE

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Yours truly,

Thomas J. Singer

Thomas J. Singer
936 St. Charles Ave. #302
New Orleans, La. 70130

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-----Rev. (John) Henry Kleinhagen was born circa 1814 at Berka, Saxony, Germany. He was a student of the Mission School of Rev. Gessner in Berlin prior to coming to New Orleans in about 1844 to serve as Vicar of the German Evangelical Church on Clio St. He became pastor of this church in 1845 and served for 2 years.

In 1847, he started a congregation called St. Marian Kirche on then named St. Peter's St, now named Gaienne St. This evolved into the Zion Luthern Church located on Euterpre between Dryades and Baronne which was dedicated on 18 March, 1949. It later moved to 1924 St. Charles Ave. In 1854, he resigned in conflict.

The New Orleans City Directory of 1857 states that a Lutheran Church located on the corner of Rampart and Bienville had been organized in 1855; it had 50 communicants. H. Kleinhagen was its pastor and he lived in the back of the church.

Rev. Kleinhagen then bought a lot on Felicity Road (St.) between Rampart and Franklin and there built at his own expense a church he named The German Evangelical Lutheran Bethlehem Church. He was Pastor here when his wife, Caroline nee Eitel died in 1858. Here he ministered until shortly before his death on 7 July, 1885, aged 71. His obituary states that he baptized some 5,000 infants and married fore than 1500 couples. He was buried in The Girod St. Cemetery and when it was demolished, his remains were removed to Hope Mausoleum.

In 1894, Louise Kleinhagen, his 44 year old daughter who lived between Constance and Marengo died. Her obitary mentions no kin but was to be copied by San Francisco area newspapers so possibly she had kin there.

Rev. Kleinhagen had personally printed forms on which he entered the marriage record of the couple and which he gave to them. His last 31 years of service was in his privately owned church being unassociated with any Synod. With his death, his deminishing congregation scattered and the building was sold and moved. If he kept records of the baptisms, marriages and funerals is not known but quite likely he did. What care of them if they did exist, is not currently known.

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Rev. John Henry Kleinhagen (1815-1885),
pioneer Lutheran and Evangelical minister.

The tomb of Elizabeth Tyler, the wife of the renowned architect, James Gallier (died 1842) was barely visible in the rank vegetation. The fairly well preserved tomb of Rev. John Henry Kleinhagen, (1815-1885) could be discerned through the high weeds. Pastor Kleinhagen, one of the few Germans interred in Girod, was a native of Saxony who came to New Orleans in the early 1840's. In 1844 he preached in the Clio Street German Evangelical Church. In 1847 he helped found Zion Lutheran Church, then on Euterpe between Dryades and Baronne. In 1854 he withdrew, bought a lot on Felicity Street between Rampart and Franklin and built, at his own expense, a church which he called Bethlehem Church. Here he preached regularly for 31 years, baptizing some 5000 infants and marrying more than 1500 couples. Rev. Kleinhagen was held in high esteem by members of his own congregation and those of other churches. When he died in 1885, his funeral was attended "by an immense amount of people."

Somewhere, under the weeds and scrub was the burial place of Col. Francis Asbury Lumsden and his wife. Col. Lumsden, then 60 years of age, his wife, son and an adopted infant daughter had taken pas-

sage on the lake steamer *Lady Elgin* on September 6, 1860. Leaving Chicago, the boat ran into a violent storm on Lake Michigan and at 2:30 in the morning of the next day the *Lady Elgin* was struck by the schooner *Augusta* and sank within 20 minutes with a loss of nearly 300 lives, among them the Lumsdens. Col. Lumsden was the co-owner of the *Daily Picayune* and a public-spirited and well-liked citizen. All New Orleans was shocked by the tragedy and for days the papers were filled with accounts of the disaster. Friends meanwhile made strenuous efforts to recover the bodies of the Lumsden family. At length, after weeks of searching, the lake gave up the body of Col. Lumsden and it was encased in a "metallic sarcophagus which was covered with black velvet" and sent to New Orleans.



Col. Francis Asbury Lumsden, one of the founders of the New Orleans "Daily Picayune," and his family lost their lives in a steamboat accident in 1860.

Bob: I got these pages from a History of the 1st Evangelical
United Church of Christ currently located at Claiborne
and Jefferson; Rev. Paul J. Pic was most helpful.
This history is now 61 years old!

Introductory

LOOSE LEAVES

from the Geneological Tree of the
First Evangelical Church of New Orleans, La.
A. D. 1825---1925



IN WEAVING the loose leaves into a Jubilee Wreath, the writer makes no pretense of completeness and symmetry in the presentation. Owing to unavoidable hindrances, the work had to be done in a hurry; important documents have been destroyed by fire, and some events that occurred during the years which may properly be termed the Dark Ages of our Church's history—though as interesting as they are sad—are not mentioned because they might unnecessarily wound the feelings of good and true people yet living, who, though not connected with our Congregation, deserve our consideration. The omission causes no disturbing break in the record.

The thought suggested itself to the writer to discard all faded and worm-eaten leaves and to use only the green and healthy ones in weaving the wreath; but on second thought he decided to give a true presentation of the experiences of our Congregation as they are chronicled in the records of the Church. The members of today will the more honor the faithful men and women who remained true and loyal to their God and their Church under most trying circumstances, will the more appreciate the inheritance they left us, and the more earnestly determine to prove themselves worthy successors to those who fought the good fight of faith even when they could have but the faintest vision of the brighter days ahead which we now enjoy by the grace of God.

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"LET US GO AND VISIT OUR BRETHREN"
(Acts 15:26)

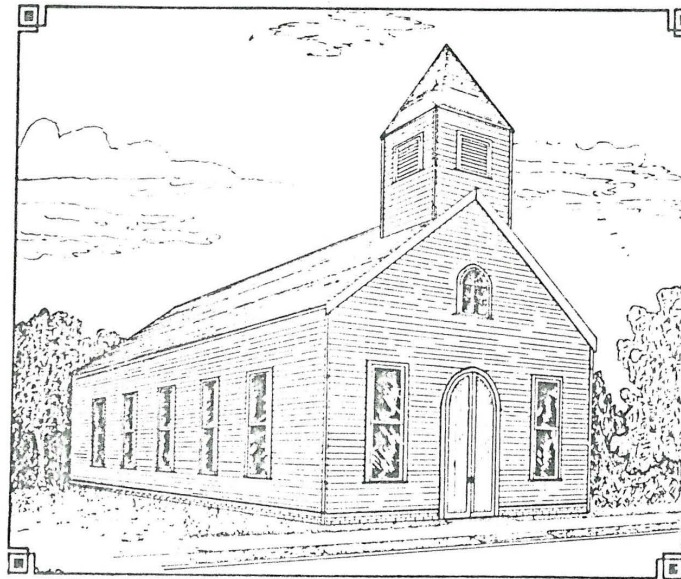
1826—1834

In the year 1811 there were ordained to the ministry Samuel Mills and five of his friends who with him had decided to become missionaries. As the door to foreign missions did not open to them immediately, the desire to do mission work drove Samuel Mills and one of his companions to undertake a journey in the interest of home missions. They traversed the country from Marietta, Ohio, to New Orleans where they arrived in the early part of 1815. Upon their return they reported they had not found a single copy of the Bible in any of the homes in which they lodged in Louisiana. They also reported about some Germans in New Orleans whom they had found to be in want of Churchly ministration. Upon the strength of this report eastern Churches delegated messengers to the South, and near the end of the year 1828 Pastor Henry Hiestand arrived here, sent by the Reformed Synod of Ohio. He reported that the First German Protestant Congregation, which had been formed some time before 1826, and which had procured a state permit in 1826, was not in good condition because it lacked experienced leadership. Under his leadership the Congregation re-organized, and on the fourth day of January, 1829, in the Baptist Church (a school house on Burgundy Street near Canal) elected him as their pastor. He served them for three years. Again the small group found itself orphaned and was forced to return to the former method of reading services until January, 1834, when Pastor John W. Mueller, likewise of the Reformed Synod of Ohio, arrived and was elected Pastor with a "salary of one thousand dollars and incidentals, with the privilege of making yearly recreation trips". Pastor Mueller seems to have made great demands not only on others but also on himself and proved to be a diligent, true, earnest and God-fearing worker in the Lord's vineyard. From his assumption of the pastership date the oldest records which the Congregation possesses.

"THE CONGREGATION THEN HAD PEACE AND
BUILDED ITSELF" (Acts 9:31)

1835—1840

As much as the Congregation longed for a house of worship which it could call its own, it never-the-less for many years had to accept the hospitality of English-speaking Congregations, for the people were not in a position to meet the demands of the Pastor and also raise money for a Church. But work was carried on unrelentingly in the upbuilding and strengthening of the



FIRST CHURCH BUILDING, DEDICATED OCTOBER, 1840.
PARTLY DESTROYED BY FIRE, 1858.
REBUILT WITHOUT STEEPLE, 1859.

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spiritual life and also in the preparation for the acquisition of a Church home of their own. The believers came together from all parts of the city and vicinity and for the time being were all of one heart and one soul. Finally, on the 10th day of April, 1839, the Congregation bought the property on which the Church stood until 1905 for \$4,600. They paid \$600 in cash and with the remaining means, which do not seem to have been very considerable, began to build the Church; but owing to the lack of money and mainly through troublesome discord that had crept in, the dedication was delayed until the fourth day of October, 1840. The size of the Church cannot be ascertained, it is only known that a steeple graced the Church. Those of our members who remember the Church without the steeple have seen it after the first fire in 1858, caused by lightning. The reconstruction of the building without the steeple cost \$750.00, not including the refurnishing which also had become necessary. After Mr. George Amann, with 25 German musicians had given a concert for the benefit of the Church, and a house-to-house canvass had been completed among the members of the Church, there remained on the first of January, 1845, a debt of \$2,603.65 upon the Church property. From this it can be clearly seen that the members brought financial sacrifices. During the years 1840 to 1844, the members contributed the sum of \$5,400 besides the \$6,000 paid in salary, and other running expenses. If we also take into account the fact that in the years 1840 to 1844 the membership suffered a constant decrease, we must say: Our loyal fathers and mothers brought a great sacrifice to have the work of the Lord carried on in their midst. Our membership today is much larger; how do our loyalty and our sacrifices compare with theirs? As long as Pastor Mueller

served the Congregation there seems to have been a growth in spiritual life. The faithful members enjoyed spiritual blessings and readily sacrificed their earthly goods without taking recourse to festivities of doubtful character, which later, unfortunately, claimed the greatest interest of the Congregation. But already in the early part of 1839, just after the erection of the Church had begun, disturbances had set in. A man appeared on the surface who claimed to be an ordained minister preaching a "liberal gospel", and who at once tried to draw away members. Just then Rev. Mueller felt himself compelled to take several of his members to task concerning their unchristian life. Now the psuedo-pastor had clear sailing. With a number of disgruntled members, for whom Rev. Mueller preached a christianity too strict for their libertine inclinations, he organized an opposition congregation to which the Presbyterians, misled by misrepresentations and not understanding the situation, opened their Church. The loyal members increased their efforts and faithfully worked together with Rev. Mueller to complete the Church building. The opposition church was but short lived, the "liberal pastor" having proven an unworthy man; but Rev. Mueller felt himself so much handicapped by constant annoyances that he resigned before the completion of the Church building, in the early part of 1840. He nevertheless served the Congregation for some time, which is evident from the fact that in 1840 he confirmed a class, the Congregation then meeting in a wagon shed, corner Race and Constance Streets. Rev. Mueller thereafter practiced medicine and died in 1850 as one of the prominent physicians of New Orleans. Mrs. Wm. Frantz, well known to many of our members, is Dr. Mueller's grand-daughter.

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**"AND THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS RARE
IN THOSE DAYS AND THERE WAS
NO OPEN VISION" (I Sam. 3:1)**

1840—1858

A sad period set in with the departure of Rev. Mueller. All kinds of men, all boasting to be "free and independent" ministers, served the Church between the years 1840 and 1843; it cannot be stated how many. In 1843 Rev. J. E. Schneider was pastor. In 1844 Rev. Christian Schrenck, sent by the Basel Mission Society, arrived and became Pastor of our Church, and also of the "German Orthodox Evangelical Congregation of New Orleans and Lafayette"—the present Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul's Church on Port and Burgundy Streets—which had been organized during the years of chaos, 1840 to 1843. Rev. Schrenck found it a severe task for a man of weak constitution to serve both Congregations, and gladly he accepted the help of Mr. H. Kleinhagen, a student of the Mission School of Rev. Gossner, in Berlin, Germany, who offered his services as a vicar. In 1845 the Congregation made the vicar their Pastor, and he served them in that capacity until September, 1847, when, in distress, the Congregation recalled Rev. Schrenck. Assisted by his brother, Rev. Martin Schrenck, he again served both the Clio Street Church and the Church at Port and Burgundy Streets, and in answer to a request from people in Lafayette—now the fourth ward—the Church Council gave him permission to minister to them also, conducting services now and then in the Chapel of an Episcopal Congregation. During his pastorate the Congregation grew in membership and in christian activities and a long and peaceful development seemed to have set in. There were members, however, who thought that the Pastor ought to restrict his labor to complying with the re-

quest of his parishioners and to the preaching of an objective sermon, leaving it to everyone whether to apply the truths of the text to the manner of living or not. He was simply to be a lecturer on divine truths and christian duties, but was not to direct the searchlight of divine truth into the homes and upon the daily paths of his parishioners. When these members managed to get the upper hand, Rev. Schrenck resigned. After his resignation, Pastors Buehler and Schaller, from the Third District, preached alternately for some time until Rev. Hiestand, the first Pastor of the Congregation, became their Pastor for a second time; but the six weeks of his activities were stealthily abused towards the alienation of the members from their Church and towards the establishment of a new short-lived opposition Church. His successor was Pastor Ernst Berger who served the Congregation for two years and then founded a "humanist church". After the Church had been without a preacher for about eleven months there appeared in response to an announcement in the daily paper, a Dr. Kaessmann, who in a short time so bewitched the Congregation that within two weeks there appeared in the daily papers an announcement of his coming ordination to the ministry. However, before the ordination could be accomplished the "venerable sir" decided to pawn the Church records, the Communion set, the Baptismal bowl and the seal which had been entrusted to his care, to a saloon keeper for food and drink, and then he disappeared into the wide world. Pastor M. Otto of Carrollton preached several times; then a Dr. Vallas held several "religious lectures", and six months after he had been elected Pastor tried to lead the Congregation into the Episcopal camp. After fruitless endeavors to secure a Pastor through advertisements in the daily papers, it was decided, after a long debate, to reinstall Rev. C. Berger provided he would give two promises in writing: To preach the Gospel in

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conformity with the Church constitution and to leave the Congregation as soon as he would be notified of his release by majority vote of the Congregation. He promised in May, and disappeared in September. The Church was then rented to an English-speaking Congregation with the proviso that the Congregation be allowed to gather for worship from 10 to 12 o'clock on Sundays whenever they would have a Pastor. Upon repeated advertisements in the daily papers there appeared and was installed a Dr. Kretschmar. He remained just one month, whereupon Rev. John Hoefler became his successor. He preached from February until the Church was partly destroyed by lightning, May 1, 1858. When, after the restoration of the Church, regular services were to be resumed, the Pastor announced that he was too busy on Sunday mornings to preach; he would be willing to preach in the afternoons. The Congregation, however, gave him notice of dismissal and elected Mr. J. B. Erben, whose ordination was sought for but never came to pass. Instead of the ordination there is recorded in the minutes a resolution that a committee should make it known through the newspapers "that Mr. Erben was fully authorized to baptize, to perform marriage ceremonies and so forth". He stayed seven months, shrouding his coming and his going in mystery.

What can these men have preached? Indeed, "the Word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no open vision". Under such circumstances what could be done for the rearing of the young in Christian life? What was offered to hungering, thirsting and tempted souls? It is marvelous that there remained loyal members who loved Christ and His Word and Sacraments and lived a Christian life—that there were such is to be seen from opinions expressed in the minutes—and who, through hope

of better times, remained steadfast in their endeavors to keep the Congregation alive.

One bright spot against the dark background is the ministry of Pastor Schrenck. During his time peace and confidence abounded; consecration of life was stressed; the Christian education and training of the youth was taken in hand and carried out according to ability, and deeds of charity and mission work beyond the boundaries of the Congregation were carried on with fervor. An affectionate relationship existed between the Congregation and their Pastor who loved them unselfishly as a flock entrusted to his care by the Lord. Evidences of this tender relationship were manifest daily. When Rev. Schrenck had been sick for a long time, the Congregation decided that they would not allow their Pastor to pay his doctor bills since his salary was so meager. They desired that he should live in their midst, near the Church, and several times the feasibility of building a parsonage was discussed. Of all the host of Pastors who came and went during the Dark Ages of the Church, excepting only Rev. Mueller, he was the only one who on his departure did not attempt to organize an opposition Church, although more than the others he had both reason and opportunity to do so. He did not consider the Congregation there for his sake, but he knew himself placed there by God for the sake of the Congregation. He was the only one who, after his departure, retained the respect of the Congregation, and he alone, with the exception of Rev. Kleinhagen, died as a respectable man, Christian and Pastor. In his farewell sermon, which was free from all bitterness, as the writer was told by one present on that occasion, he said among other things "Could I but take you and press you so close to the heart of Jesus Christ that you could never tear yourselves away from Him! Could I but so impress His holy image upon your hearts that you could never erase it!" After

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a long and blessed ministry he died in Evansville, Ind., as a member of the Evangelical Synod of North America, with which he affiliated himself after leaving New Orleans, to which Synod now also belongs our Congregation which he served with such great love and faithfulness.

**"THEY HOWEVER, THINKING IT WAS A
SPIRIT, CRIED OUT" (Mark 6:49)**

1859—1879

"Where shall we get a Pastor?" was the question after Mr. Erben's dark retreat. The puzzled Church Council knew not which way to turn. They had lost all faith in the ministerial free lances who were sent by no one and were responsible to no one. Now and then opportunity presented itself to secure a reliable Pastor, provided they would apply to a Synod and affiliate with a Church body. But the so-called "free and independent" ministers had, with skill, painted all Synods as black as blackest night; they had made the Congregation believe that the main object of Synods was to subject the Congregations to spiritual bondage, to rob them of every vestige of religious freedom as also of the privilege of self-government in their financial affairs, yes even of their Church property. They had good reasons for such calumny, knowing only too well that their own activities would soon come to an end if the Congregation would realize the manifold advantages derived from membership with a religious corporation having for its sole aim the mutual strengthening for effective work in the vineyard of the Lord, the protection and strengthening of the weak, and the improvement of spiritual and moral standards. The isolated situation of New Orleans before the railroads reduced the dis-

stances prevented the deceived Congregations from judging by observation, and thus these pretended Knights of Spiritual Liberty came and went, boasting as their principal credential their non-apostolic succession. Most of them had sunk the story of their past in the depths of the ocean, also their honest occupation (if ever they had had one) and fished out of the blue water that could not betray them a noble title, such as Candidate of Theology, Doctor of Philosophy, or Doctor of Divinity. The Congregation trembled when it engaged their services, it trembled again when it had to dismiss them, knowing that invariably these hirelings loved the wool more than the sheep and would not leave the Congregation behind unfleeced if they could help it. Several times the Congregation had to regain possession of Church records, Communion set and Baptismal bowl through costly legal procedure; and yet, whenever someone suggested to write to some Synod for a Pastor, the leaders thought they saw a medieval ghost and cried out "We are a free Congregation and will not sell our liberty". So one sad experience followed another. As a rule each one of these ecclesiastical free lances was ready to put his counterfeit prophetic mantle upon any one who applied; but once it happened that even the "free" Pastors refused to ordain a man whom the trustees of our Church intended to make their Pastor if he could secure ordination. The Church Council cut the Gordian knot by declaring "We will adorn our candidate with a prophetic mantle of our own making; it is just as genuine as is yours". The president of the Church Council ordained the candidate having received answer from the legislature that the State would consider marriages legal that were performed by a man ordained by an incorporated Congregation. They again had cause to rue their act. After such sad experiences they were exceedingly glad when, in a confidential letter, Rev. Pressler of the Church

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